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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

REPORT

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SUBJECT Examples of Worker Dissatisfaction,
Absenteeism, and Sabotage at the
Stalin Works in Zaluží

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three-page report

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[redacted] which discusses the morale of workers, evidence of dissatisfaction on their part, increase of absenteeism and fluctuation of labor, and some specific examples of sabotage at the Stalin Works in Zaluží, near Most.

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Absenteeism, Fluctuation and Sabotage at Stalin Works

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1. Current working morale - From about 1954 the workers who believed in the regime or who have believed that the situation would gradually improve have begun to succumb to the influence of their not organized (non-Communists) colleagues and subsequently their working morale declines as does their Party enthusiasm for political development, Party meetings etc. Reasons for the workers' depressed morale are caused partly by the fact that the longtime promised prosperity is nowhere to be seen and also by the ever increasing working norms and stakhanovite systems; they know that they are working harder than ever before for less pay and that they are having less purchase power. Hand in hand with this goes the workers' hatred for the white-collar workers because of the fact that they have to support them by their work - support the greater part of the administration. There is also another factor to be borne in mind, since the increased decentralization of the Party apparatus the influence of the less important organizations of ROH or CP or their fractional branches retreated into background giving place to higher placed organizations. This could be noticed especially when rewards were being distributed and also at the reorganization of the working week from 48 to 46 hours. The higher level organizations are staffed by functionaries who are holding the best jobs in a plant and their wage-conditions are much more favorable than those of the rank-and-file workers, and besides, they hold the power derived from their Party functions as well as from their superior positions. Thus it often happens that the rewards are given to persons holding higher positions regardless whether they deserve it or not and they get the kind of jobs which bring them better pay. This group of higher level Communists are holding tightly together; therefore any interference, protests, or requests of lower class workers whether organized or not are entirely meaningless.
2. Loss of confidence in Trade-Unions - The aforementioned conditions result in loss of faith in the trade-union organizations which could be clearly seen in the events occurring in March and April 1956 at the Stalin Works at Zaluszi near Most. The management of Stalin Works in their endeavor to catch up with the production target (in February 1956 the production plan for synthetic gasoline was fulfilled by 72% only) made a pledge that before the end of 1956 the plan will be fulfilled in full. The workers, still under the influence of the unjust distribution of the so-called "Frost calamity" rewards awarded solely to the leading personnel - did not show much interest. The plant's management knew that the pledge could possibly be fulfilled only by an increased import of crude oil from the USSR. At the end of April 1956 the production from the imported material began and according to the production chart it was clear that the monthly output in May 1956 would reach approximately 150% of the planned one.

The management, however, against all expectations, announced that the plan was fulfilled on 105% only, which meant that the wage-fond did not need to have been overstepped and therefore there were no increased wages for workers. Thus the plant succeeded in fulfilling the plan but the workers were neither rewarded for the increased production nor were they eligible for a reward for fulfilling of the plan; on the contrary, they were not even reimbursed for the loss which they have suffered in February 1956 due to the unfulfilment of the plan. The embitterment of the workers was enormous and resulted in complete disinterest in the meetings of ROH; since this event the meetings have never reached more than of about 10% attendance. In addition, many workers sent letters of protest to the Board of Trade Unions and the KSC as well as to the "Vystavba" periodical. Neither one of the abovementioned replied to their protests. The situation during 1956 reached such a stage that even the criticism of workers, majority of whom are organized members of ROH or the KSC, was silenced. Thus the working class which passively agreed with the regime has began to revolt against it which results in large absenteeism and many sabotages.

3. Absenteeism and fluctuation - This is the stumbling-block of Czechoslovak industry and it is the manifestation of political and working morale of workingmen. Absenteeism and fluctuation was practiced on the whole by the part of workers who disagreed with the present regime. However, in 1956, it could be observed, in rather disturbing numbers, also amongst the Party members and workers' groups which have never before have shown any signs of absenteeism. This was the result of recent events. Lately, a great excused absenteeism has been registered, for example during the first 9 months of 1956 it reached 500,000 working hours (62,500 working days) - this figure includes also the inexcused hours the number of which is not very high owing to the fact that each inexcused absenteeism is being deducted from the annual leave and certain deduction from wages are also made. Fluctuation did decline in comparison to the previous years because plant managements cause a lot of difficulties to employees asking for permission to leave the job. Since 1955 release from employment is possible either from health reasons or on account of Party recommendations. The trade-unions have nothing to say in the matter - solely the management together with personnel department can decide. Release from working contract on grounds of health reasons is very rare as the plant's physicians have to observe KSC instructions and therefore the physicians are hated by the workers and often their attitude is being opposed with great determination on the workers' part. Termination of employment on the grounds of "loss of faith" occurs very rarely; it is practiced only in cases when a worker gets mixed up with delicts of political nature or if he is guilty of theft of national property.
4. Sabotages - Besides absenteeism and fluctuation and deteriorating working morale, Sabotage is the last weapon against the present regime. Even though sabotages get less publicity than the absenteeism etc. sabotage have grown into a great menace to the regime. In many cases the real causes of sabotage are difficult to determine, especially whether their cause was intentional or due to some technical defects. Great losses are caused by them to the regime as it often means interruption of production.

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This way relatively large groups of workers take revenge for their disappointment and show their dissatisfaction with the regime. Skilled technical staff and maintenance personnel have great opportunities to cause sabotages. There are also many cases of open sabotage which of course is rather dangerous to workers as they are extensively interrogated by the security forces.

In Stalin Works at Zaluzi, sabotages have increased immensely owing to the strained conditions in the plant. For instance, in spring 1956, in the hydrogenation section the No.11 Chamber was out of order for three weeks (in spite that this chamber is the best one in the entire plant) - due to sabotage. Also a well-planned sabotage has delayed repair of the "DHD Chamber" (production of gasoline for aircraft) for almost 14 days. This was to be a revenge for awarding special rewards to leading persons only and for lowering of wages to workers. It is known that the sabotage was done by one person from the group of the hated foreman FILIP and it was done so skillfully that it was impossible to determine whether it was intentionally done or due to some technical mishap.

In the plant's electric power station the "Stavba 200" an open sabotage occurred in summer 1956. One of the employees shed sand into the compressor and the entire electric power station was out of order for several days. Stores of spare parts are a very convenient field of sabotages. It is known that sterekeepers hand out on purpose wrong type of material (such as pipes of insufficient strength etc.) and thus bring about more frequent repairs and stoppages.